Amendments to the Claims:

1. **(Currently amended)** An electrically-operated steering lock device having a lock shaft which is movable between a protruded position where a steering shaft is locked and a retracted position where the steering shaft is unlocked, and a lock shaft moving device coupled to an electric locking motor and serving to move said lock shaft, the electrically-operated steering lock device further comprising: a protrusion blocking device ~~which is electrically driven and~~ which, when said lock shaft is placed in a retracted position, engages with a receiving portion formed in said lock shaft to block protrusion of said lock shaft; and a holding part for holding said protrusion blocking device in a position where protrusion of said lock shaft is ~~blocked.~~ blocked;

wherein said protrusion blocking device comprises a protrusion blocking plunger movable between an extended position in which said plunger is engageable with said receiving portion and a retracted position in which said plunger is withdrawn from said receiving portion;

wherein said protrusion blocking device further comprises an electric safety motor which is operable, upon activation, to perform a plunger withdrawal operation for withdrawing said protrusion blocking plunger from said extended position to said retracted position in order to withdraw said protrusion blocking plunger from said receiving portion so as to allow protrusion of said lock shaft to said protruded position; and

wherein said holding part comprises an engagement portion formed on said lock shaft and arranged to prevent said protrusion blocking plunger from being withdrawn from said blocking device receiving portion even upon activation of said electric safety motor to perform a plunger withdrawal operation for withdrawing said protrusion blocking plunger, to thereby prevent movement of said lock shaft from said retracted position to said protruded position due to an electrical malfunction.

2. **(Previously presented)** The electrically-operated steering lock device according to Claim 1, wherein said lock shaft moving device comprises a spring for biasing said lock shaft to a protruded position, and an electrically-operated member which is to be engaged with an engagement recessed portion formed in said lock shaft to move said lock shaft to the retracted position.

3. **(Currently amended)** The electrically-operated steering lock device according to Claim 1, wherein said electric safety motor of said protrusion blocking device comprises a solenoid ~~having a plunger which is to be engaged with said receiving portion formed in said lock shaft~~.

4. **(Currently amended)** The electrically-operated steering lock device according to Claim 1, wherein said lock shaft moving device enables said lock shaft to move to the protruded position when the electric locking motor is rotated forward, and enables said lock shaft to move to the retracted position when the electric locking motor is rotated in reverse, ~~and said holding part comprises an engagement portion formed in said lock shaft,~~ and wherein, in a state that an engagement between said protrusion blocking device and said engagement portion has been released by reverse rotation of the electric locking motor, said lock shaft is allowed to protrude by forward rotation of the electric locking motor.

5. **(Currently amended)** The electrically-operated steering lock device according to claim 1, wherein said receiving portion comprises a recess portion of said lock shaft, and said ~~protrusion blocking device comprises a~~ plunger ~~having~~ has a flange portion that is extendable into said recess portion of said lock shaft to create the engagement of said protrusion blocking device with said receiving portion and that is engageable with said holding part to prevent retraction of said flange portion from said receiving portion.

6. **(Currently amended)** An electrically-operated steering lock device for use in locking rotation of a steering shaft, said steering lock device comprising:

a lock shaft arranged to be movable between a protruded position in which the steering shaft is locked, and a retracted position in which the steering shaft is unlocked, said lock shaft having a blocking device receiving portion formed therein;

a lock shaft movement transmission arranged to be coupled to an electric locking motor and serving to move said lock shaft between the protruded and retracted positions upon operation of the electric locking motor;

an electrically operated protrusion blocking device that is engageable with and disengageable from said blocking device receiving portion, and that is operable, when said lock shaft is placed in said retracted position, to engage with said blocking device receiving portion so as to block protrusion of said lock shaft to said protruded position; and

a holding part arranged to hold said protrusion blocking device in engagement with said blocking device receiving portion so as to prevent unintended disengagement of said protrusion blocking device from said blocking device receiving portion, and to thereby prevent unintended protrusion of said lock shaft from said retracted position to said protruded ~~position.~~ position;

wherein said protrusion blocking device comprises a protrusion blocking plunger movable between an extended position in which said plunger is engageable with said blocking device receiving portion and a retracted position in which said plunger is withdrawn from said blocking device receiving portion;

wherein said protrusion blocking device further comprising an electric safety motor which is operable, upon activation, to perform a plunger withdrawal operation for withdrawing said protrusion blocking plunger from said extended position to said retracted position in order to withdraw said protrusion blocking plunger from said blocking device receiving portion so as to allow protrusion of said lock shaft to said protruded position; and

wherein said holding part comprises an engagement portion formed on said lock shaft and arranged to prevent said protrusion blocking plunger from being withdrawn from said blocking

device receiving portion even upon activation of said electric safety motor to perform a plunger withdrawal operation for withdrawing said protrusion blocking plunger, to thereby prevent movement of said lock shaft from said retracted position to said protruded position due to an electrical malfunction.

7. **(Previously presented)** The electrically-operated steering lock device according to claim 6, wherein

said lock shaft moving transmission comprises a spring biasing said lock shaft toward the protruded position, and an electrically-operated member which is to be engaged with an engagement recessed portion formed in said lock shaft to move said lock shaft to the retracted position.

8. **(Currently amended)** The electrically-operated steering lock device according to claim 6, wherein

said ~~protrusion blocking device~~ electric safety motor comprises a solenoid ~~having a plunger which is to be engaged with said receiving portion formed in said lock shaft.~~

9. **(Currently amended)** The electrically-operated steering lock device according to claim 6, wherein

said lock shaft moving device enables said lock shaft to move to the protruded position when the electric locking motor is rotated forward, and enables said lock shaft to move to the retracted position when the electric locking motor is rotated in reverse, ~~and said holding part comprises an engagement portion formed in said lock shaft,~~ and wherein, in a state that an engagement between said protrusion blocking device and said engagement portion has been released by reverse rotation of the electric locking motor, said lock shaft is allowed to protrude by forward rotation of the electric locking motor.

10. **(Currently amended)** The electrically-operated steering lock device according to claim 6, wherein

said blocking device receiving portion comprises a recess portion of said lock shaft, and said ~~protrusion blocking device comprises a~~ plunger ~~having~~ has a flange portion that is extendable into said recess portion of said lock shaft to create the engagement of said protrusion blocking device with said blocking device receiving portion and that is engageable with said holding part to prevent retraction of said flange portion from said blocking device receiving portion.